

VZCZCXRO6594  
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHAN #0863/01 3491440  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 151440Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3140  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000863

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E MBEYZEROV  
PLEASE PASS TO USAID/AFR AMARCUS, GH/HIDN CBONNER

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [KHIV](#) [KWMN](#) [KOCI](#) [MA](#)  
SUBJECT: GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE: MADAGASCAR COMMENT

REF: 09 STATE 125761

¶1. SUMMARY: This cable is in response to reftel, "Global Health Initiative: Promoting Greater Awareness and Participation". Post welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Global Health Initiative (GHI). Post supports the GHI Principles as they bring attention to key elements of health programming that will enhance the impact of the USG's support, further strengthen USG leadership in the health sector in Madagascar, and, most importantly, improve the health of Madagascar's population. The new high-level emphasis on country-led ownership and strengthening health systems are extremely welcome advances in the USG approach to foreign assistance. Critically, Post urges that the principle of "Increase Impact Through Strategic Integration and Coordination" be applied to the GHI structure and strategy so that inter-agency coordination can focus on enhancing health programming rather than dividing the budget and that Missions lead the strategic process in country. END SUMMARY.

#### OVERVIEW

¶2. Post welcomes the opportunity to provide formal input on the Global Health Initiative (GHI). USAID Health Officers have been actively participating in several of the Working Groups and sharing perspectives from Madagascar. Post looks forward to providing further comment on the GHI strategy and implementation plans when requested.

¶3. The GHI brings much-needed attention to key areas for improving health in developing countries. The focus on country ownership, strengthening health systems, addressing maternal and child health and family planning, and promoting integration and alignment correctly addresses elements not present, or not sufficiently strong, in the initial designs of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI).

¶4. Post notes that comments below on activities and coordination with the Government of Madagascar (GOM) reflect past, and hopefully future, work. Due to the March 2009 military coup, the USG has suspended all work with the de facto GOM. Nonetheless, the USG remains the largest bilateral donor in the health sector, and the second largest donor overall after the World Bank.

#### COMMENTS ON GHI PRINCIPLES

¶5. WOMEN AND GIRL-CENTERED APPROACH: GHI's emphasis on women and girls is well-placed and appropriate and consistent with USG's historical focus. Post is aware that GHI Working Groups have been looking at the cultural determinants of health and identified the importance of also reaching men, as they often control financial, decision-making, cultural and other barriers to women and girls accessing healthcare.

¶6. STRATEGIC INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION: Madagascar has been working towards smart integration of public health services for several years. The USG is active in advising and supporting this process. There are many examples from Madagascar showing that individual interventions, such as family planning, are more

successful when offered with other services, such as child immunization and post-partum care.

¶7. Within the USG in Madagascar, USAID is the main agency implementing health programs. HHS/CDC is also a vital partner in PMI and in providing support for other infectious diseases such as Rift Valley Fever. Furthermore, the Peace Corps has volunteers in health, DOS supports community health initiatives through the Ambassador's Self-Help fund, and DOD is involved in malaria and water and sanitation activities in the Comoros and HIV/AIDS in Madagascar. Within USAID's portfolio, integration across sectors has been a Mission principle. Health programs foster collaboration and capitalize on synergies with Title II Food Security, Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, environment and rural development, and education program activities.

¶8. Post believes that it is extremely important to acknowledge lessons learned during the initial implementation of other whole-of-government approaches such as PEPFAR and PMI. Missions, in coordination with host country governments and other donors, rather than headquarters, should lead the assessments of country programs and the design of the GHI in-country. This has worked extremely well with PMI. However, Mission staff who have also served in PEPFAR countries have experienced an overly prescriptive approach from headquarters that did not adequately take into account the Mission's knowledge, experience, and level of involvement on the ground.

¶9. Post also urges that the administrative and management structure of GHI reflect lessons learned from PEPFAR and PMI. Mission health staff note that PMI is structured in a way that encourages positive collaboration between USG agencies with a focus on the disease, not inter-agency turf battles.

ANTANANARI 00000863 002 OF 002

¶10. STRENGTHEN AND LEVERAGE KEY MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS: While this is important at the international level, Post suggests that GHI also explicitly acknowledge the importance of USG involvement with multilaterals at the country level. USG field staff successfully work with counterparts from these institutions to implement global partnerships (such as the GAVI Alliance) and leverage funds.

¶11. COUNTRY OWNERSHIP AND INVESTMENT: This is an extremely important principle that is welcomed by Post and one that is certain to enhance the effectiveness of USG assistance. In Madagascar, as in many countries with robust USG health programs, the USG is an active member of sector groups led by the host country Ministry of Health (MOH). USG staff and USG-partner staff, along with other donors and sector players, participate in the development of national plans and strategies for the sector and for specific sub-sector areas (i.e. malaria, family planning, etc.). When this effort is successful, country plans reflect ownership from all stakeholders. Having a specific USG strategy to work within host country plans will enhance the USG's role as a collaborative partner and increase sustainability.

¶12. HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: Specific emphasis on strengthening health systems is a critical element in fostering sustainability and enhancing impact of USG interventions. In Madagascar, the USG has been supporting the strengthening of the supply chain, health care financing (particularly through community-led insurance schemes), the national health information system, the national laboratory and regional surveillance laboratories, and contraceptive security. Additional resources and the recognition of this important principle are extremely welcome.

¶13. Post suggests that community-based health programs should be highlighted as part of health systems strengthening. Many of the evidence-based, critical interventions for maternal, neonatal and child health, family planning and nutrition, are actions that can and should be taken in the community and in lowest-level health facilities. Madagascar is one of the countries where community health has been embraced as the best way to reach the most underserved populations. With USG and other donor assistance, community health workers provide a range of services from information and communication for behavior change to provision of

injectable contraceptives. In the near future, they will also diagnose and treat malaria and pneumonia.

¶14. METRICS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION: GHI's emphasis on aligning USG indicators with those already in use in the country is very important.

¶15. RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION: Madagascar has had the opportunity to help pilot a number of approaches to health service delivery that have influenced other country programs. The most recent example is USG support for evaluating and piloting community-based distribution of injectable contraceptives. This extremely successful initiative to make this popular family planning method more readily available to rural women is being scaled-up throughout the country and has served as a model for several other African countries. Post welcomes the opportunity to play a leadership role in other innovations. On the overall research goals of GHI, Post particularly looks forward to work on identifying methods for evaluating the added value of integration and strengthening health systems.

¶16. COMMENT: The GHI offers an important opportunity for the USG to increase the depth and scale of its foreign assistance in health with the ultimate goal of improving the health of host country populations. Post strongly suggests that the actual structure and implementation of GHI at the country level incorporate lessons-learned and best practices from other "whole-of-government" approaches, particularly PEPFAR and PMI. Mission Madagascar looks forward to being a part of this initiative. END COMMENT.

MARQUARDT